A New Species of *Medetera* Fisch. (Dipt.: Dolichopodidae) in Britain

By A. A. Allen, B.Sc., A.R.C.S.[1]

Medetera oscillans n. sp., ♂ ♀

A middle-sized *Medetera* belonging to the *impigra-jugalis* group of species, of moderately stout build, noticeably less slender and long-legged than e.g. the *truncorum*-group species, or the common *M. jacula* Fall. For its description, I cannot do better than give almost verbatim that drawn up by my friend and colleague Mr. E. C. M. d'Assis Fonseca.

Epistoma metallic green, bluish-green, or occasionally purplish, rather coarsely and very densely alutaceous with traces of ridges, dusted greyish just below antennae and along facial suture; clypeus shining darker green or aeneous, quadrate to transverse, smoother and much more finely alutaceous, narrowly dusted whitish each side. Antennae entirely black, 3rd segment about as long as wide, arista practically apical, distinctly longer than face. Frons dusted greyish, the metallic green ground-colour mainly visible. Postocular cilia pale yellow.

Thorax dusted brownish-grey on disc, sides and scutellum greyish. Acrostichal bristles well developed, hindmost longer than distance between the rows; the small bristles of the posthumeral patch numerous. Propleural bristles consisting of one strongish pale yellow bristle with 2-3 short pale hairs close above it. Scutellum with 4 bristles.

Abdomen dark aeneous-green to sage-green, or very slightly bluish-green, moderately shining, thinly dusted greyish; abdominal pubescence yellowish. Male hypopygium slender.

Legs not very long, black with only the knees yellowish. Middle tibia with the normal pair of dorsal bristles near base. Coxal bristles light brown. Hind femur with long pale anteroventral bristles towards apex; middle femur with an almost complete row of longish pale anteroventrals. Hind tarsus with 2nd segment $1\frac{2}{3}$ as long as metatarsus.

Wings with apical section of postical vein varying from distinctly more to slightly less than $1\frac{1}{2}$ times as long as hinder crossvein; cubital and discal veins strongly convergent so that first posterior cell at hinder crossvein is quite 4 times as wide as at tip. Halteres entirely yellow.

Length 3.25–3.75 mm.

Kent, North-west: Blackheath, Charlton, Abbey Wood, especially (so far) the first-named district; chiefly on poplar trunks, vi-viii.

Holotype ♂: Blackheath, 17.vi.70 (A. A. Allen), in the author's collection; allotype ♀, ditto, 7.vii.73, *in coll.* British Museum (Nat. Hist.), London; paratypes (♀) ditto, various dates, in the latter collection and those of Mr. E. A. Fonseca and the author.

This species might be traced (with some doubt) to *melancholica* Lundb. in existing keys (for the Palaearctic fauna, Thuneberg, 1955; Negrobov & Stackelberg, 1971; and for the British fauna, Collin, 1941, *Ent. mon. Mag.*, **77**: 141-5), were it not for the short arista of the latter—only as long as the face. Its original description, however (Lundbeck, 1912, *Dipt. Danica*, **4**: 235-6), shows that the two species must in fact be very different—*melancholica* being considerably smaller and much darker with the propleural bristles and postocular cilia above black instead of yellow, etc. In Collin's key the new species might run out to *cuspidata* Coll. because of the unequal pro-

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pleurals, but again the latter's short arista, dark halteres and coxal bristles, sexual characters and smaller size, forbid the identification.

Compared with *impigra* Coll., *jugalis* Coll. and their immediate allies, *oscillans* differs by its smaller vein-ratio[2], viz. less than 2; in those species it is greater than 2. *M. impigra* (which appears to be rather common in some districts) has a darker abdomen—"more black than greenish-black" as Collin rightly says—which moreover is darker-haired; the clypeus longer than broad, most bristles dark (but not postoculars), and the tiny bristles of the posthumeral patch much fewer. *M. jugalis* (a much rarer species which I have not seen) would seem to be more like *impigra* than *oscillans*, but its abdominal pubescence is almost whitish and third antennal segment smaller and shorter, evidently wider than long. The present species is on average rather larger than its nearest allies; an apparently useful pointer to it lies in the markedly greenish cast of the abdomen, combined with the general size and build and of course the vein-ratio.

When Mr. Fonseca was recently studying some flies of this genus that I had submitted to him, he detected among them a species which could not be satisfactorily determined from any of the available keys. The earliest capture of this insect was a ♀ on 9.vi.64 from the trunk of an old Lombardy Poplar (*Populus italica*) at Abbey Wood—a collecting-site I have briefly described elsewhere, e.g. 1962, *Ent. Rec.*, **74**: 244. On 17.vi.70 a ♂ occurred on a dead and decayed cherry tree in my garden at Blackheath. I next met with it on 1.vii.71 on one or two trees of *P. italica* at the end of a row fringing a sports-ground in the same general area, on which at some other times *M. diadema* L. has been plentiful; here both sexes of *oscillans* were present, but the small sample collected (in ignorance of its interest) was not promptly enough dealt with and became "wet". This is unfortunate because all specimens taken since then have been females. Such were found at intervals during June and July, 1972-3, on a log of black Italian poplar (*P.* × *canadensis*), and on nearby trunks of elm (*Ulmus procera*) infested by *Scolytus* beetles, in a lane not far behind the end of my Blackheath garden. The earliest date I have noted is 9.vi, the latest 7.viii. A few more occurred in 1973, but later that year the poplar log was removed, after which the species was seen only twice more at the locality (8 and 23.vii.74, on elm). In the present year, 1975, my sole captures of *M. oscillans* were of two ♀♀: one here at Charlton on the trunk of a hybrid poplar (apparently *alba* × *italica*) in a park (20.vi), the other at the Abbey Wood locality already mentioned on a dead *P. italica* (22.vii). I failed to find any at either of its previous stations at Blackheath.

I incline to the belief that *M. oscillans* will prove largely attached to poplar as a host tree—its presence on others, such

[2] i.e., the ratio of the length of last section of postical vein to that of the outer crossvein. At Mr. Fonseca's suggestion, I have named the species in allusion to the fact that this sometimes exceeds, and at others falls short of, the norm of 1.5.

as elm, being most likely dependent on their proximity to poplar on which it is breeding. This, at least, is suggested by the evidence so far available. The single example from my Blackheath garden could have been a stray from the breeding-site in the vicinity, not then discovered. It would seem further to be a species whose numbers may fluctuate a good deal from year to year, and in which females tend to predominate heavily.

My best thanks are due to Mr. Fonseca for drawing my attention to this unexpected addition to the fauna, for generously inviting me to describe it, and for his constant and invaluable help. It may be of interest to mention in passing that I have taken in the same area what appears to us to be another new species of the genus, the description of which, however, must await the discovery of more material.

Notes and Observations

COLLECTING MYRMECOZELA OCHRACEELA (TENGSTROM). — Finding this moth was one of the high spots of a very successful fortnight in Scotland in 1975. On the 29th June we were round Loch Rannoch and late in the hot afternoon struck up into the woodland looking for the wood ants' nests. These were not easy to find being quite small compared with those in Southern England. Having located a nest we used the bee-smoker on the surrounding vegetation which was mainly heather. As nothing appeared we smoked the nest itself and were delighted to disturb four of the yellow moths. More than an hour passed in the fruitless smoking of other nests before we hit upon a rather larger one where we were able to see plenty of *ochraceella*. It was noticeable that they kept close to the debris of the nest, usually sitting on the dry stalks of grasses in the bare perimeter area. One dead moth was seen being carried by the ants, and the moths were quick to flit from their perches when an ant touched them. Nevertheless they obviously survive in a sort of partnership with the ants, their larvae feeding on the refuse in the nest. One cannot help wondering though how the moths emerge from below, surrounded as they are by swarms of voracious ants ready and able to seize anything that moves. — R. FAIRCLOUGH, Blencathra, Deanoak Lane, Leigh, Reigate, RH2 8PZ.

TWO SPECIES OF MICROLEPIDOPTERA REARED FROM UNUSUAL FOODPLANTS. — (i) *Leucoptera spartifoliella* (Hübner). The life-history of *Trifurcula pallidella* Zeller is not known, but it has been supposed that it mines the bark of dyer's greenweed (*Genista tinctoria*). One of the localities where *T. pallidella* used to be taken is Ditchling Common in Sussex. Accordingly, my wife and I visited the locality on the 24th April, 1973 to search for its larva. We found that the bark of *Genista* was indeed being mined by a lepidopterous larva; so we dug up a plant which was infested and took it home with us. I extracted one of the larvae from its mine in order to describe it and was immediately aware that it was not a nepticulid. In due